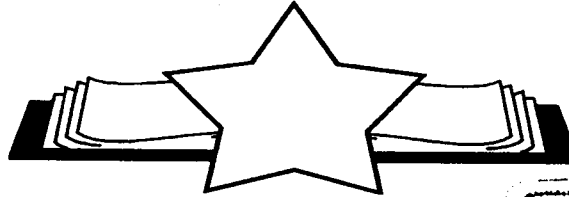


NEW JERSEY

1999-2000
Guidelines and Application

STAR



ORIGINAL

SCHOOLS

Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 22, 1999

County	Gloucester County		
District (Proper Name)	Gloucester County Special Services	School District	
District Address	204 East Holly Avenue		
	street/p. o. box		
	Sewell, NJ 08080		
	city		
District Telephone	(856) 256-0522	Fax (856) 256-0502	Email
Chief School Administrator	Frederick Keating		
Nominated School or Nominated Charter School (Proper Name)			
Gloucester County Alternative High School			
School Address	3 Redmond Avenue		
	street/p. o. box		
	Glassboro, NJ 08028		
	city	zip code	
School Telephone	(856) 881-7100	Fax (856) 881-7812	Email cormmmary@snip.com
School Principal	Mary S. Cormier		
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature			

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY

Approved: ☒ Yes ☐ No County Superintendent's Signature Sandra I Lowe

**NEW JERSEY
STAR SCHOOLS
1999-2000 APPLICATION**

RESPONSES to the information below and the statements must be **ANONYMOUS**. No reference should be made to the names of the district or the school. Use the words "the school" in referring to the applicant in the responses to the statements.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High School Other: _____	Grade Levels _____ _____ _____ 9 - 12 _____	School Enrollment <u>85</u> Specialization of School or Whole-School Reform Model _____ _____
Previous Star School: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, Year(s) _____		

KEYBOARDED RESPONSES to the statements below must be **no more than a total of four pages**. Keyboard the statement followed by the response. Limit your response to the number of lines specified.

1. Describe the school's specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives, the student educational needs and the *Core Curriculum Content including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards** that it addresses. Detail how it promotes high student achievement. **(Maximum of 70 lines for response)**

2. Describe the professional development activities and research of the school's faculty, and detail to what extent these activities contribute to exemplary teaching practices in their classrooms. Explain the link between these activities and the specialization or whole-school reform model. **(Maximum of 30 lines for response)**

3. Describe the leadership style of the school's administration and how the management and educational program demonstrate administrative and fiscal efficiency. Describe any innovative scheduling and/or management strategies. **(Maximum of 40 lines for response)**

4. Describe student performance for the school years 1997-98 and 1998-99 and the means by which student results are measured, and outline other school accomplishments during this period. Detail the relationship of both student performance and school accomplishments to the specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives. **(Maximum of 40 lines for response)**

5. Describe collaborative efforts with parents, business, the community and/or higher education that contribute to a school environment governed by the students' needs and promoting high student achievement. **(Maximum of 30 lines)**

6. **Previous Star School Winners Only:** Provide an addendum to your application that describes efforts to expand or replicate the specialization or whole-school reform model within the school and/or the district. Have there been dissemination activities beyond the school or district? If so, please elaborate. **(Maximum of 30 lines for response)**

*The May 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.
6appss.20

1. Describe the school's specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives, the student educational needs and the *Core Curriculum Content including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards** that it addresses. Detail how it promotes high student achievement.

The school is a county public educational program that addresses the academic needs of students in grades nine through twelve through the core curriculum content standards. Because many of the school's students experience educational and behavioral problems an emphasis is placed on the cross-content workplace readiness standards. The cross-content workplace readiness standards are an important focus for alternative students who have not experienced success in traditional school programs due to ineffective decision-making and problem-solving abilities and weak self-management skills. These students' educational problems often stem from personal and family difficulties, as well as from a school climate that is ill suited to their educational, social, and emotional needs. The typical student exhibits chronic problems associated with persistent failure, lack of self-discipline, truancy, and absenteeism. These problems can lead to substance abuse. Alternative students generally have a history of negative school experiences and patterns of behavior that have been disruptive to their own education as well as that of their classmates.

The Peer Mediation program helps students to develop problem-solving abilities in a relevant context. The peer mediation program was shared with students throughout the county and participating county students were invited to the schools 24 hour lock-in, a drug and alcohol program that further promotes life skills. The Peer Mediation program was so successful that plans are underway to extend it to the county elementary schools. Integration of Boy Scouts of America Learning for Life and Junior Achievement programs (Economics, The Economics of Staying in School, and The Company Program) into the regular classroom activities further address cross content workplace readiness standards, and life skills development. In order to more fully address the need for career planning and workplace readiness, Intro to Careers, and Entrepreneurship classes run daily. All students in these classes have the opportunity to participate in *Job Shadowing* activities directly linked to their classroom activities. Individual career and education plans have been developed as a part of the student's portfolio. All students have access to computers during the school day and much of the classroom instruction is practical hands-on application of language and visual arts, and technology skills such as the development of pamphlets, electronic and printed correspondence, and school activity posters. The school has a school store that is run by students.

The school-based learning component of our career exploration program is complimented by connecting activities with the community. Students take class trips to business and industry, participate in the Goals for Youth Program, and attend annual career fairs. The Game of Life will be added this year and students will "play" with real social service providers in our county. It is a one-day event in which the students are given a problem or they can anonymously substitute their own real problems and then approach various county social service providers in an attempt to solve the problem. As in real life, the students may need to visit and fill out forms for various agencies in order to resolve the real or pretend problem.

The students benefit from an alternative school setting that addresses the core curriculum content standards while providing a strong clinical component and recreational re-teaching. The *Recreational Re-teaching Program* consists of numerous recreational activities throughout the year. The County Sheriff's department participates in camping trips through this program. The school provides a drug-free, structured, nontraditional setting for students from public and nonpublic programs. Individualized educational plans are developed to include mental health services, community transition, and high academic standards based on the core curriculum and cross-content workplace readiness standards. Community involvement and family support helps students in their pursuit of career and post secondary education goals.

2. Describe the professional development activities and research of the school's faculty, and detail to what extent these activities contribute to exemplary teaching practices in their classrooms. Explain the link between these activities and the specialization or whole-school reform model.

Children are fragile, their needs change day to day. Therefore, our school adjusts teaching techniques to the learning styles and needs of our children. We implement multiple sensory teaching, with emphasis on linguistic, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills to meet goals for the future of our students. In order for students to meet the high academic standards set forth by the school, students need to develop verbal communication skills in a more positive fashion. The majority of the students are placed in this type of

school setting after failing in a traditional school. Academically, students who have great potential according to standardized testing results, continue to fail in the traditional school setting. Therefore the school establishes a three pronged approach to learning: *high academic standards, clinical support, and recreational re-teaching*. All staff members are in-serviced in areas such as crisis management, multiple intelligence, behavior management, drug and alcohol awareness, positive communication, first aid and CPR training, and technology updates. We are fortunate to have a talented staff who frequently shares their strengths in bi-weekly staff meetings. We feel it is important to learn from one another, as well as attend specialized conferences. All teachers and support staff is encouraged to take advantage of such training and then share with their co-workers. This sharing of activities promotes the number one rule of the school "*respect for the school family*." We are fortunate to have a unique staff of empathetic, pragmatic, and highly energized individuals who give well beyond the contractual day and week to assist students in becoming all that they can become. Team teaching and group collaboration are daily occurrences at this school. Group counseling sessions run each period to assist students and staff with everyday difficulties and burnout issues. Over two thirds of the staff participates in college level classes of the Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral levels each year, another indicator of the devotion and drive toward exemplary teaching practices and work ethic.

3. Describe the leadership style of the school's administration and how the management and educational program demonstrate administrative and fiscal efficiency. Describe any innovative scheduling and/or management strategies.

Prior to obtaining our academic mission it should be stated that the financial efficiency of the district is excellent, with no recommendations to the district audit for the second year. The mission of the school is predicated on a three- pronged approach (high academic standards, clinical support, and recreational re-teaching). The school utilizes innovative methods for instruction, while networking with familiarized community resources, staff, students, and parents to obtain high academic standards. Site-based council teams, PTSA, and parent student support groups enable others to "buy in" to "the school family" concept. One management strategy that has shown great progress over the last two years is our *ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS*. The round table members may consist of the following: the principal, students, hall monitors, a substance abuse counselor, clinicians and/or school psychologist. Each person has a chance to speak about the issue at hand. After stating the problem from each person's point of view, the group begins to brainstorm on how to go about solving the problem, thus reducing the conflict. At this point, trained staff may choose to utilize the teachable moment and assist students in better understanding their dialogue and feelings on the issue. After talking amongst the group, the principal is utilized as a last resort to resolve ongoing difficulties. (This almost never happens.) The final decision may be forgiveness, punishment, or an explanation of why this issue may have come about and what the students can do to prevent the same problem from happening again. The round table represents unity and gives a sense of complete fairness among all participating in the discussion. This type of structure helps students to achieve respect for others as well as respect for themselves. It allows students to practice positive verbal communication while enriching linguistic, interpersonal and intrapersonal awareness. *Round Table Discussions* also teach students to express themselves while allowing others to reach out and give advice when trying to solve a problem.

There are five key rules for *Round Table Discussions* to be successful. The dimensions are as follows:

- ❖ Responsiveness: the willingness to help provide students with prompt service. Examples include acting quickly to resolve problems and provide clear, non-judgmental input, fulfilling the needs of each individual student.
- ❖ Empathy: the degree of caring and individual attention provided to the students by staff and peers. An example may be to recognize the difference among individuals that have come from the discussion and show how the *school family* has been strengthened.
- ❖ Confidentiality: Students know that their problem will be handled in a confidential fashion and they recognize the importance of placing all facts honestly on the table in order to resolve differences. Anything that is discussed in the meeting never leaves the room.
- ❖ Respect: the ability to provide the respect that was promised when the students entered the school. This respect reduces violence in the school setting.
- ❖ Assertiveness: the knowledge that it is acceptable and preferable for individuals to assert their feelings, providing an open mind is maintained. It is understood that feelings are neither right nor

wrong-but belong to the individual. Positive verbal expression is necessary for others to begin to understand different points of view.

With this amount of teamwork amongst the principal, clinicians, staff and students we come to fair, honest conclusions while promoting positive verbal communication among the *school family*. This helps release barriers, negative feelings, hatred and promotes acceptance of differences.

4. Describe student performance for the school years 1997-98 and 1998-99 and the means by which student results are measured, and outline other school accomplishments during this period. Detail the relationship of both student performance and school accomplishments to the specialization or whole-school reform model and its objectives.

Promoting verbal communication strategies has also changed the lives of students in this school. Attainment of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, and linguistic awareness has helped to strengthen students' self image as well as giving them tools to soar ahead in the academic world. All students were unsuccessful in their public schools and many were on the verge of dropping out. Some of our most recent records show a 53% Honor Roll, 26.5% Superintendent's List, and 26.5% were able to reach the Principal's List. They are setting high goals for themselves due to the support within our school-family environment. The school staff provides students with the tools they need to enhance their verbal communication skills and achieve socially and academically.

Students have demonstrated mastery of their verbal skills by reducing physical conflicts to zero since February 1998. They express the positive and negative feeling with peers, staff, and family on a regular basis. Many have actually defended themselves in court situations, showing their growth, and benefiting from reduced or dropped charges. To the amazement of the public, the students are graduating high school and attending college, post secondary institutions, and obtaining jobs. Seventy five percent of our first graduating class (1997-1998) attended college, while 83 percent of the 1998-99 graduates are attending college. The school has blossomed from eight students adopted at its inception in July 1996 to 81 students today. As of September 1999 all graduates of the school were either attending post-secondary institution and/or gainfully employed. Expansion plans to include seventh and eighth graders will take place in September 2000.

5. Describe collaborative efforts with parents, business, the community and/or higher education that contribute to a school environment governed by the students' needs and promoting high student achievement.

Community support and business and industry participation in the development of workplace readiness skills was addressed extensively in section one. The collaborative efforts of clinicians outside of the school have been extremely beneficial to the well being of the students. Four agencies are present within the school to *teach verbal communication skills* to students and *give clinical support* when needed. The agencies: Center for Family Guidance, Together Inc., SODAT, and Reality House, bring varied specialties to the school. Center for Family Guidance offers psychiatric clinical treatment, both individually and with small groups. The groups focus on assisting families with parenting, communication skills, and medication adjustments, as necessary. Together Inc. offers community wrap around services and provides group counseling to students at the school. Together Inc. also trains students in conflict resolution and peer meditation. Reality House, the third agency involved with the school specializes in drug and alcohol prevention services and identifying vulnerabilities in students. They work closely with Together Inc. in providing retreats and ongoing sessions on peer mediation and verbal communication skills. SODAT, our newest commuting support offers training to young parents, with an emphasis on parenting skills and verbal communication. The support staff takes an integral part in teaching life skills, and educating students with regard to adolescent emotions, and drug and alcohol prevention.

Parents are currently *organizing* a twelve-step program that provides parent education and support. This program promotes the development of good parenting skills. Families of present and past students help in fund raising activities that are organized for the school periodically throughout the school year. They also volunteer their professional expertise to the school.

The *potential* for high-school dropouts *no longer exists within this program*. Students now have the confidence and skills needed to apply for college admission and scholarships. Students also have the opportunity to get a head start on their college studies by attending the local county college and university

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during high school. The students are graduating and are pursuing their post-secondary education and career plans. The scholarships allotted to the program every year include The Commerce Bank Scholarship as well as two awarded by Clarkson University. The reason this is possible is due to the staggering rates of the school graduates over the past two years. The program is exceptional because it gives students a second chance to succeed. Students are taught to utilize multiple learning styles and are given the tools to understand and maximize their strengths. District strategies to promote students social and academic achievement are effective and deserve the Star School designation as we enter a new millennium made brighter by our **students** and new found **success**.